

Bahamian Cultures and Customs – part 2

The Bahamas like many other Caribbean countries have many different cultures and customs. However, some of the customs are **strictly Bahamian**. Some **festivals** include Junkanoo, Pineapple Festival, Conch Cracking, Salty Fest, Crab Fest, Onion Fest, Coconut Fest, and Goombay Summer Festival. Some **customs** are bush medicine, regattas, asue, obeah, and wakes. Some special days and holidays are also strictly Bahamian such as **Boxing Day**, **Majority Rule Day**, and **Fox Hill Day**.

Some of the **customs** have developed over a long period and others were brought here by our African ancestors and slaves and were handed down to us. Customs and holidays such as **Boxing Day** are still with us today. The slaves were given a special holiday at Christmas time when they could leave the plantations to be with their family and celebrate the holidays with African dance, music, and costumes. Some of the customs have been modernized or changed.

Junkanoo: This festival was named after a man named **John Canoe**. This festival was practiced in Africa by different tribes or groups as religious or social ceremonies. They painted their faces, made special costumes, and paraded through the villages with handmade drums, horns, and other instruments.

Asue: This is a Bahamian custom where person or groups get together to save money. At the end of every week or month, or over a given period of time one person will receive a 'draw or a hand.' The amount of money one receives depends on how many people are in the Asue and how much money is 'thrown.'

Practice of Obeah – Obeah in the Bahamas is the practice of 'witchcraft.' In Bahamian terms, it means when someone tries to '**fix you**' or hurt you. This was practiced by African slaves and handed down to us Bahamians. This is still practiced by Bahamians on many of The Family Islands today. In other Caribbean Islands, it is called Voo Doo.

Funerals/Wakes – During funeral wakes people in the community get together the night before a funeral and sing for the dead until morning sometimes. They often have drinks and native foods such as souses to eat at the Wake.

Bush Medicine – Different types of bushes were boiled and drank as medicine in The Bahamas from long ago. Some of the bushes that are still used as medicine today include Bagerina, Dill Seed, Cerasee, Shepherd's Needle, Five Finger, Aloe Vera, and Love Vine.

Another custom that is practiced among Bahamians is **Open Markets**. This is when people sell food items, fresh fruits, vegetables, fish, clothing, souvenirs, and other wares and goods at a port of entry such as the harbour, or along the roadside.



Questions:

1. What is the Bahamian name for Voo Doo? (1pt) _____
2. Define the term Asue. (2pts)

3. On which Family Islands are the following festivals held? (5pts)
 - a) **Pineapple Festival** _____
 - b) **Conch Cracking Festival** _____
 - c) **Fox Hill Day** _____
 - d) **Crab Fest** _____
 - e) **Goombay Summer Festival** _____
4. From whom did Junkanoo get its name? (1pt) _____
5. Explain what happens at a funeral wake? (2pts)

6. From where did most Bahamian customs originate. (1pt) _____
7. Name **five (5)** customs that are strictly Bahamian. (5pts)

8. What is an open market? (2pts)

9. Why did slaves celebrate Boxing Day long ago? (2pts)

10. List six (6) well known Bahamian bush medicines. (6pts)

